

GLORIFYING IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

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S E R M O N

ON

GALATIANS vi. 14.

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EDITION.

THE benefit which the Editor has derived from this extraordinary Sermon, and the present scarcity of the work in which it is found, determine him to select it for separate publication.

The observation with which the Author enters upon his Subject, might in a humbler sense, be applied to the Discourse itself:—it demands attention; and it will richly reward it.

Let him, who in the pursuit of perishing objects, has passed by the most grand and interesting ever exhibited to man, here discover his mistake;—let him also recollect the short time allotted for correcting it; and the guilt, as well as danger of neglecting so great salvation.

Should the more serious Reader have been accustomed to regard discussions of this kind as rather speculative, than influential; may he receive from these pages the strongest conviction, that “the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto them that are saved, it is the POWER OF GOD.”

A

S E R M O N

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

IT is an old and useful observation, that many of the most excellent objects in the world are objects whose excellency does not appear at first view; as, on the other hand, many things of little value appear more excellent at first than a narrower view discovers them to be. There are some things we admire because we do not know them, and the more we know them, the less we admire them: there are other things we despise through ignorance, because it requires pains and application to discover their beauty and excellency.

This holds true in nothing more than in that glorious, despised object mentioned in the text. There is nothing the world is more divided about in its opinion, than this. To the one part it is altogether contemptible; to the other it is altogether glorious. The one part of the world wonders what attractives others find in it; and the other part wonders how the rest of the world are so stupid as not to see them, and are amazed at the blindness of others, and their own former blindness.

It is said of the famous reformer Melancton, when he first saw the glory of this object at his conversion, that he imagined he could easily, by plain persuasion, convince others of it:—that the matter being so plain, and the evidence so strong, he did not see how, on a fair representation, any could stand out against it. But upon trial he was forced to express himself with regret, ‘That old Adam was too strong for young Melancton; and

‘that human corruption was too strong for human persuasion, without divine grace.’

The true use we should make of this is certainly to apply for that enlightening grace to ourselves which the apostle Paul prays for in the behalf of the Ephesians. Eph. i. 17. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ—may give us the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him.* But as here and in other cases, prayers and means should be joined together; so one of the principal means of right knowledge of the principal object of our faith and ground of our hope, is to meditate on the glory of that object, asserted so strongly in this text; and that by one, who formerly had as diminishing thoughts of it, as any of its enemies can have.

In the verses preceding the text, the apostle tells the Galatians, what some false teachers among them gloried in: here he tells what he gloried in himself. They gloried in the old ceremonies of the Jewish law, which were but shadows; he gloried in *the cross of Christ*, the substance. He knew it was an affront to the substance, to continue these shadows in their former force after the substance itself appeared, therefore he regrets that practice with zeal, and at the same time confines his own glorying to that blessed object which the shadows were designed to signify. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, &c.*

Here the apostle sheweth us both his high esteem of the cross of Christ, and the powerful influence of it upon his mind. The cross of Christ signifies in Scripture sometimes our sufferings for Christ, sometimes his suffering for us. As the latter is the chief and most natural sense of the words, so there is reason to think it is the sense of the apostle here. This is the sense of the same expression in the 12th verse of this chapter, which speaks of persecution (that is our suffering) for the cross of Christ, *i. e.* the doctrine of Christ’s cross. Besides, it is certain that it is not our sufferings, but Christ’s sufferings, which we are chiefly to glory in, to the exclusion of other things; and it is not the former chiefly, but the latter, that mortifies our corruptions, and crucifies the world to us.

The cross of Christ may signify here, not only his death, but the whole of his humiliation, or all the suf-



ferings, of his life and death; of which sufferings, the cross was the consummation. The apostle both here and elsewhere, mentions the Cross, to remind us of the manner of his death, and to strengthen in our minds, those impressions which the condescension of that death had made, or ought to have made in them.—That the Author of liberty should suffer the death of a slave; the fountain of honour, the height of disgrace; that the punishments which were wont to be inflicted on the meanest persons for the highest offences, should be inflicted on the greatest person that could suffer: this is the object that the apostle gloried in.

There are not two things more opposite than glory and shame; here the apostle joins them together: the cross in itself is an object full of shame; in this case it appeareth to the apostle full of glory. It had been less remarkable, had he only said he gloried in his Redeemer's exaltation after he left the world, or in the glory he had with the Father, before he came to it, yea, before the world was: but the object of the apostle's glorying is the Redeemer, not only considered in the highest state of honour and dignity, but even viewed in the lowest circumstances of disgrace and ignominy;—not only as a powerful and exalted; but as a condemned and crucified Saviour.

Glorying signifies the highest degree of esteem: the cross of Christ was an object of which the apostle had the most exalted sentiments, and the most profound veneration: this veneration he took pleasure to avow before the world, and was ready to publish on all occasions. This object so occupied his heart and engrossed his affections, that it left no room for any thing else; he gloried in nothing else; and as he telleth us in other places, He counted every thing else but loss and dung, and would know nothing else, and was determined about it. 1 Cor. ii. 2.

The manner of expressing his esteem of this object has a remarkable force and vehemence in it; *God forbid!* or let it by no means happen: as if he had said, 'God forbid, whatever others do, that ever it should be said, that Paul the old persecutor, should glory in any thing else, but in the crucified Redeemer; who pluck-

‘ed him as a brand out of the fire, when he was running farther and farther into it: and who pursued him with mercy and kindness, when he was pursuing Him in his members, with fierceness and cruelty. I did it through ignorance (and it is only through ignorance that any despise him;) he has now revealed himself to me, and God forbid that the light that met me near Damascus should ever go out of my mind; it was a light full of glory; the object it discovered was all glorious; my all in all; and God forbid that I should glory in any thing else.’

His esteem of that blessed object was great; and its influence on him proportionable. By it the world was crucified to him, and he was crucified to the world; here is a mutual crucifixion. His esteem of Christ was the cause why the world despised him, and was despised by him: not that the cross made him hate the men of the world, or refuse the lawful enjoyments of it. It allowed him the use of the latter, and obliged him to love the former; but it crucified those corruptions, which are contrary both to the love of our neighbour, and the true enjoyment of the creatures. This is called fighting, warring, wrestling, and killing. The reason is, because we should look upon sin as our greatest enemy; the greatest enemy of our souls; and of the Saviour of our souls: this was the view the apostle had of sin, and of the corruption that is in the world through lust. (2 Pet. i. 4.) He looked upon it as the murderer of his Redeemer; and this inspired him with a just resentment against it: it filled him with those blessed passions against it mentioned by himself, 2 Cor. vii. 11. as the native fruits of faith, and repentance, zeal, indignation, revenge; that is, such a detestation of sin, as was joined with the most careful watchfulness against it.

This is that crucifying of the world, meant by the apostle; the reason of the expression is, because the inordinate love of worldly things is one of the chief sources of sin; the cross of Christ gave such a happy turn to the apostle’s affections, that the world was no more the same thing to him that it was to others, and that it had been formerly to himself. His soul was sick of its pomp; and the things he was most fond of before, had now lost

their relish with him ; its honours appeared now contemptible, its riches poor, its pleasures nauseous ; its examples and favours did not allure, nor its hatred terrify him ; he considered the love or hatred of men, not chiefly as it affected him, but themselves, by furthering or hindering the success of his doctrine among them ; all these things may be included in that *crucifying of the world*, mentioned in the last clause of the verse : but the intended ground of the discourse being the first clause, the doctrine to be insisted on is this :

‘ That the cross of Christ affords sinners matter of glorying above all other things : yea, that it is in a manner the only thing they should glory in. The whole humiliation of Christ, and particularly his death for the sake of sinners, is an object that has such incomparable glory in it, that it becomes us to have the most honourable and exalted thoughts of it.’—As this is evidently contained in the text, so it is frequently inculcated on us in other Scriptures, (2 Cor. iv. 6. 2 Cor. iii. 18. 1 Cor. i. 19,—24.) It is plain that when the scriptures speak of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is meant chiefly of his glory in the face of Christ crucified ; that is, in the work of redemption finished on the cross.

In discoursing on this subject, it will be proper first to consider briefly, What it is to glory in any object ; and then, What ground of glorying we have in this blessed object proposed in the text.

To glory in any object includes these two things, first a high esteem of it ; and then some concern in it. We do not glory in the things we are interested in, unless we esteem them ; nor in the things we admire and esteem, unless we are some way interested in them. But although all professing Christians are some way concerned to glory in the cross of Christ, because of their outward relation to him by their baptismal covenant ; and because the blessed fruits of his cross are both plainly revealed, and freely offered to them ; yet, it is those only who have sincerely embraced those offers, that can truly glory in that object. Yet what is their privilege, is the duty of all : all should be exhorted to glory in this object, and to have a high esteem of it, because of its excellency in itself ; to fix their hearts in it by faith, because it is of

ferred to them; to shew their esteem of it, by seeking an interest in it; and having a due esteem of it, and obtained an interest in it, to study a frame of habitual triumph in it. But the nature of this happy frame of mind is best understood, by considering the glory of the object of it.

The ancient prophets who foretell Christ's coming, appear transported with the view of his glory. Not only the New Testament but also the Old, represents the Messiah as the most remarkable and most honourable person that ever appeared on the stage of the world. It speaks of him as a glorious Governor, a Prince, a King, a Conqueror; besides other magnificent titles of the greatest dignity, shewing that his government should be extensive and everlasting, and that his glory should fill the whole earth. But, while the prophets foretell his greatness, they foretell also his meanness; they shew, indeed, he was to be a glorious king, but a king who would be rejected and despised of men: and that after all the great expectation the world would have of him, he was to pass over the stage of the world disregarded and unobserved, excepting as to the malicious treatment he was to meet with on it.

About the time of his coming, the Jews were big with hopes of him as the great Deliverer, and chief ornament of their nation. And if history may be credited, even the heathens had a notion about that time, which possibly was derived from the Jewish prophecies, that there was a Prince of unparalleled glory to rise in the east, and even in Judea in particular, who was to found a kind of universal monarchy. But their vain hearts, like that of most men in all ages, were so intoxicated with the admiration of worldly pomp, that that was the only greatness they had any notion or relish of: this made them form a picture of Him who was the desire of all nations, very unlike the original.

A king which the world admires, is one of extensive power, with numerous armies, a golden crown and sceptre, a throne of state, magnificent palaces, sumptuous feasts, many attendants of high rank; immense treasures to enrich them with, and various posts of honour to prefer them to,

Here was the reverse of all this; for a crown of gold, a crown of thorns; for a sceptre, a reed put in his hand in derision; for a throne, a cross; instead of palaces, not a place to lay his head in; instead of sumptuous feasts to others, oftentimes hungry and thirsty himself; instead of great attendants, a company of poor fishermen; instead of treasures to give them, not money enough to pay tribute, without working a miracle; and the preferment offered them, was to give each of them his cross to bear. In all things the reverse of worldly greatness, from first to last; a manger for a cradle at his birth; not a place to lay his head sometimes in his life; nor a grave of his own at his death.

Here unbelief frets and murmurs, and asks, Where is all the glory that is so much extolled? For discovering this, faith needs only look through that thin vail of flesh; and under that low disguise appears the Lord of glory, the King of kings, the Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty, (Psal. xxiv. 8.) the Lord mighty in battle; the heavens his throne; the earth his footstool; the light his garments; the clouds his chariots; the thunder his voice; his strength omnipotence; his riches all-sufficiency; his glory infinite; his retinue the hosts of heaven, and the excellent ones of the earth; on whom he bestows riches unsearchable, an inheritance incorruptible, banquets of everlasting joys, and preferments of immortal honour; making them kings and priests unto God; conquerors, yea and more than conquerors; children of God, and mystically one with himself.

Here appears something incomparably above all worldly glory, though under a mean disguise. But the objection is still against that disguise; yet even that disguise, upon due consideration, will appear to be so glorious, that its very meanness is honourable: it was a glorious disguise, because the designs and effects of it are so; if he suffered shame, poverty, pain, sorrows and death, for a time, it was that we might not suffer these things for ever. That meanness therefore was glorious, because it was subservient unto an infinitely glorious design of love and mercy.

It was subservient more ways than one; it satisfied the penalty of the law; it put unspeakable honour on the

commandments of it. It was a part of Christ's design to make holiness (that is, obedience to the law) so honourable, that every thing else should be contemptible in comparison of it. Love of worldly greatness is one of the principal hindrances of it: we did not need the example of Christ to commend earthly grandeur to us, but very much to reconcile us to the contrary, and to make us esteem holiness, though accompanied with meanness. Christ's low state was an excellent mean for this end. There was therefore greatness, even in his meanness: other men are honourable by their station; but Christ's station was made honourable by him: he has made poverty and meanness, joined with holiness, to be a state of dignity.

Thus Christ's outward meanness that disguised his real greatness, was in itself glorious, because of the design of it. Yet that meanness did not wholly becloud it; many beams of glory shone through it.

His birth was mean on earth below; but it was celebrated with Hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above: he had a poor lodging, but a star lighted visitants to it from distant countries. Never Prince had such visitants so conducted. He had not the magnificent equipage that other Kings have, but he was attended with multitudes of patients, seeking and obtaining healing of soul and body; that was more true greatness than if he had been attended with crouds of Princes. He made the dumb that attended him sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy, the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. He had no guard of soldiers, nor magnificent retinue of servants; but, as the centurion that had both acknowledged, health and sickness, life and death, took orders from him. Even the winds and storms, which no earthly power can controul, obeyed him; and death and the grave durst not refuse to deliver up their prey, when he demanded it. He did not walk upon tapestry, but when he walked on the sea, the waters supported him. All parts of the creation, excepting sinful men, honoured him as their Creator. He kept no treasure, but when he had occasion for money, the sea sent it to him in the mouth of a fish: he had no barns, nor corn-fields, but when he inclined to

make a feast, a few loaves covered a sufficient table for many thousands. None of all the monarchs of the world ever gave such entertainment. By these, and many such things, the Redeemer's glory shone through his meanness, in the several parts of his life. Nor was it wholly clouded at his death; he had not, indeed, that fantastic equipage of sorrow, that other great persons have on such occasions; but the frame of nature solemnized the death of its Author; heaven and earth were mourners. The sun was clad in black; and, if the inhabitants of the earth were unmoved, the earth itself trembled under the awful load: there were few to pay the Jewish compliment of renting their garments, but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels: he had not a grave of his own, but other mens graves opened to him. Death and the grave might be proud of such a tenant in their territories, but he came not there as a subject, but as an invader,—a conqueror: it was then the king of terrors lost his sting; and on the third day the Prince of life triumphed over him, spoiling death and the grave. But this last particular belongs to Christ's exaltation; the other instances shew a part of the glory of his humiliation, but it is a small part of it.

The glory of the cross of Christ which we are chiefly to esteem, is the glory of God's infinite perfections displayed in the work of redemption, as the apostle expresses it, *the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *Even of Christ crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. It is this which makes any other object glorious, according as it manifests more or less of the perfections of God. This is what makes the works of creation so glorious; the heavens declare God's glory, and the firmament, his handy-work: and we are inexcusable for not taking more pains to contemplate God's perfections in them, his almighty power, and incomprehensible wisdom, and particularly his infinite goodness. But the effects of the divine goodness in the works of creation, are only temporal favours; the favours purchased to us by the cross of Christ are eternal. Besides, although the works of creation plainly shew that God is in himself good; yet they also shew that God is just, and that he is displeased

with us for our sins; nor do they point out to us the way how we may be reconciled to him. They publish the Creator's glory; they publish at the same time his laws, and our obligations to obey them. Our consciences tell us we have neglected these obligations; violated these laws; and consequently incurred the Lawgiver's displeasure. His works, declaring his glory, shew that in his favour is life; and consequently that in his displeasure is death and ruin: yea, they lay us in some measure under his displeasure already. Why else do natural causes give so much trouble in life, and pain in death? From all quarters the works of God revenge the quarrel of his broken law: they give these frail bodies subsistence for a time, but it is a subsistence embittered with many vexations; and at last they crush them, and dissolve them in dust.

The face of nature then is glorious in itself, but it is overcast with a gloom of terror to us; it shews the glory of the Judge to the criminal; the glory of the offended Sovereign to the guilty rebel: this is not the way to give comfort and relief to a criminal; it is not the way to make him glory and triumph. Accordingly the enemies of the cross of Christ who refuse to know God, otherwise than by the works of nature, are so far from glorying in the hopes of enjoying God in heaven, that they renounce all those great expectations, and generally deny that there is any such blessedness to be had. Conscience tells us we are rebels against God; and nature does not shew how such rebels may recover his favour;—how in such a well-ordered government as the divine government must be, the righteous Judge and Lawgiver may be glorified, and the criminal escape, much less how the Judge may be glorified, and the criminal obtain glory likewise.

The language of nature, though it be plain and loud in proclaiming the glory of the Creator, yet it is dark and intricate as to his inclination towards guilty creatures. It neither assures peremptorily that we are in a state of despair; nor gives sure footing for our hopes. If we are favourites, whence so many troubles? If we are hopeless criminals, whence so many favours? Nature shews God's glory, and our shame; his law our duty,

and consequently our danger : But about the way of escape, it is silent and dumb. It affords many motives for exciting desires after God ; but it shews not the way to get these desires satisfied. Here in the text is an object which gives us better intelligence. It directs us not merely to seek by feeling in the dark, (Acts xvii. 27.) if haply we may find ; but to seek him so as certainly to find him. Unlikely doctrine to a carnal mind ! that there should be more of God's glory manifested to us in the face of Christ crucified, than in the face of heaven and earth ; the face of Christ, in which sense discovers nothing but marks of pain and disgrace ; that bloated, mangled visage, red with gore, covered with marks of scorn, swelled with strokes, and pale with death ; that would be the last object in which the carnal mind would seek to see the glory of the God of life ; a visage clouded with the horror of death ; it would with more pleasure and admiration, view the same face when transfigured, and shining like the sun in its strength. Divine glory shone indeed then in a bright manner in that face on the mount ; but not so brightly, as on mount Calvary. This was the more glorious transfiguration of the two. Though all the light in the world, in the sun and stars were collected together into one stupendous mass of light, it would be but darkness to the glory of this seemingly dark and melancholy object : for it is here, as the apostle expresses it, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We all as with open face may behold the glory of God.*

Here shines spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love, all at once : none of them darkens or eclipses the other, every one of them gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united, eternal splendour : the just Judge, the merciful Father, and the wise Governor. No other object gives such a display of all these perfections, yea, all the objects we know give not such a display of any one of them. No where does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.

By the infinite dignity of Christ's person, his cross gives more honour and glory to the law and justice of God, than all the other sufferings that ever were or will be endured in the world. When the apostle is speaking

to the Romans of the gospel, he does not tell them only of God's mercy, but also of his justice revealed by it, Rom. i. 18. God's wrath against the unrighteousness of men, is chiefly revealed by the righteousness and sufferings of Christ. The Lord was pleased for his righteousness sake. Isa. xlii. 21. Both by requiring and appointing that righteousness, he magnified the law and made it honourable. And though that righteousness consists in obedience and sufferings which continue for a time, yet since the remembrance of them will continue for ever, the cross of Christ may be said to give eternal majesty and honour to that law which it satisfied; that awful law, by which the universe (which is God's kingdom) is governed, to which the principalities and powers of heaven are subject;—that law, which, in condemning sin, banished the devil and his angels from heaven, our first parents from paradise, and peace from the earth. Considering therefore, that God is the Judge and Lawgiver of the world, it is plain that his glory shines with unspeakable brightness in the cross of Christ, as the punishment of sin. But this is the very thing that hinders the lovers of sin from acknowledging the glory of the cross; because it shews so much of God's hatred of what they love. It would be useful for removing such prejudices, to consider, that though Christ's sacrifice shews the punishment of sin, yet if we embrace that sacrifice, it only shews it to us; it takes it off our hands; it leaves us no more to do with it; and surely the beholding our danger, when we behold it as prevented, serves rather to increase than lessen our joy; by seeing the greatness of our danger, we see the greatness of our deliverance. The cross of Christ displays the glory of infinite justice, but not of justice only.

Here shines chiefly the glory of infinite mercy: nothing in the world more lovely or glorious than love and goodness itself, and this is the greatest instance of it that can be conceived. God's goodness appears in all his works; this is a principal part of the glory of the creation. We are taught to consider this lower world as a convenient habitation, built for man to dwell in; but, to allude to the apostle's expression, Heb. iii. 3. this gift we are speaking of, should be accounted more worthy of honour than the world; in as much as he who hath built the house, hath more honour than the house.

When God gave us his Son, he gave us an infinitely greater gift than the world: the Creator is infinitely more glorious than the creature, and the Son of God is the Creator of all things. God can make innumerable worlds by the word of his mouth; he has but one only Son, and he spared not his only Son, but gave him to the death of the cross for us all.

God's love to his people is from everlasting to everlasting: but from everlasting to everlasting there is no manifestation of it known, or conceivable by us, that can be compared to this. The light of the sun is always the same, but it shines brightest to us at noon: the cross of Christ was the noon-tide of everlasting love; the meridian splendour of eternal mercy. There were many bright manifestations of the same love before, but they were like the light of the morning, that shines more and more unto the perfect day; and that perfect day was when Christ was on the cross, when darkness covered all the land.

Comparisons can give but a very imperfect view of this love which passeth knowledge: though we should suppose all the love of all the men that ever were, or shall be on the earth, and all the love of the angels in heaven, united in one heart, it would be but a cold heart to that which was pierced with the soldier's spear. The Jews saw but blood and water, but faith can discern a bright ocean of eternal love flowing out of these wounds. We may have some impression of the glory of it, by considering its effects: we should consider all the spiritual and eternal blessings received by God's people for four thousand years before Christ was crucified, or that have been received since, or that will be received till the consummation of all things; all the deliverances from eternal misery: all the oceans of joy in heaven; the rivers of water of life, to be enjoyed to all eternity, by multitudes as the sand of the sea-shore;—we should consider all these blessings as flowing from that love, that was displayed in the cross of Christ.

Here shines also the glory of the incomprehensible wisdom of God, which consists in promoting the best ends by the fittest means. The ends of the cross are best in themselves, and the best for us that can be conceived;

the glory of God, and the good of man : and the means by which it advances these ends, are so fit and suitable, that the infinite depth of contrivance in them will be the admiration of the universe to eternity.

It is an easy thing to conceive the glory of the Creator, manifested in the good of an innocent creature ; but the glory of the righteous Judge manifested in the good of the guilty criminal, is the peculiar mysterious wisdom of the cross. It is easy to conceive God's righteousness declared in the punishment of sins ; the cross alone *declares his righteousness in the remission of sins*, Rom. iii. 25. It magnifies justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it. It shews justice more awful than if mercy had been excluded ; and mercy more amiable than if justice had been dispensed with. *It magnifies the law and makes it honourable*. Isa. xlii. 21. It magnifies the criminal who broke the law ; and the respect put upon the law makes him honourable likewise, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Yea, this is so contrived, that every honour done to the criminal is an honour done to the law ; and all the respect put upon the law puts respect also on the criminal. For every blessing the sinner receives, is for the sake of obedience and satisfaction made to the law ; not by himself, but by another, who could put infinitely greater dignity on the law : and the satisfaction of that other for the sinner, puts the greatest dignity on him that he is capable of. Both the law and the sinner may *glory in the cross of Christ*. Both of them receive eternal honour and glory by it.

The glories that are found separately in the other works of God, are found united here. The joys of heaven glorify God's goodness ; the pains of hell glorify his justice ; the cross of Christ glorifies both of them in a more remarkable manner than heaven or hell glorifies any of them. There is more remarkable honour done to the justice of God by the sufferings of Christ, than by the torments of devils ; and there is a more remarkable display of the goodness of God in the redemption of sinners, than in the joy of angels : so that we can conceive no object, in which we can discover such manifold wisdom, or so deep contrivance for advancing the glory of God.

The like may be said of its contrivance for the good of man. *It heals all his diseases, it pardons all his sins,* Psal. cxiii. It is the sacrifice that removes the guilt of sin; it is the motive that removes the love of sin; it mortifies sin, and expiates it. It atones for disobedience; it excites to obedience; it purchases strength for obedience; it makes obedience practicable; it makes it delightful; it makes it acceptable; it makes it in a manner unavoidable; it constrains to it, 2 Cor. v. 14. It is not only the motive to obedience, but the pattern of it. It satisfies the curse of the law; and fulfils the commands of it. Love is the fulfilling of the law; the sum of which is the love of God and of our neighbour. The cross of Christ is the highest instance of both; Christ's sufferings are to be considered as actions: never action gave such glory to God; never action did such good to man: and it is the way to shew our love to God and man, by promoting the glory of the one, and the good of the other.

Thus, the sufferings of Christ teach us our duty by that love whence they flowed, and that good for which they were designed: but they teach us not only by the design of them, but also by the manner of his undergoing them. Submission to God, and forgiveness of our enemies, are two of the most difficult duties; the former is one of the chief expressions of love to God, and the latter of love to man: but the highest submission is, when a person submits to suffering, though free of guilt; and the highest forgiveness is, to forgive our murderers; especially if the murderers were persons who were obliged to us. As if a person not only should forgive them who took away his life, even though they owed him their own life, but also desire others to forgive them, pray for them, and as much as possible excuse them. This was the manner of Christ's bearing his sufferings; *Father, thy will be done; and, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Thus we see how fit a mean the cross is for promoting the best ends, for justification and sanctification: it would be too long to insist here in shewing its manifold fitness, for promoting also joy and peace here, and everlasting happiness hereafter: for no doubt, it will be a

great part of the future happiness to remember the way it was purchased, and to see the Lamb that was slain, at the right hand of him that gave him for that end. The things already adduced shew that the incomprehensible wisdom of God is gloriously displayed in the cross of Christ, because it hath such amazing contrivance in it for advancing the good of man, as well as the glory of God : for that is the design of it, to shew the glory of God, and good-will towards man.

But it is not only the glory of divine wisdom that shines in this blessed object, but also the glory of divine power. This to them who know not Christ is no small paradox : But to them who believe, *Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. The Jews thought Christ's crucifixion a demonstration of his want of power ; hence they upbraided him, that he who wrought so many miracles, suffered himself to hang on the cross : but this itself was the greatest miracle of all. They asked, Why he who saved others, saved not himself ? They named the reason without taking heed to it ; that was the very reason why at that time he saved not himself, because he saved others ; because he was willing and able to save others. The motive of his enduring the cross was powerful, divine love ; stronger than death ; the fruits of it powerful, divine grace ; the power of God to salvation, Rom. i. 16. making new creatures, raising souls from the dead ; these are acts of Omnipotence. We are ready to admire chiefly the power of God in the visible world, but the soul of man is a far nobler creature than it ; we justly admire the power of the Creator, in the motion of the heavenly bodies ; but the motion of souls towards God as their centre, is far more glorious, the effects of the same power far more eminent, and far more lasting.

The wounds of Christ seemed effects of weakness ; but it is easy to observe incomparable strength appearing in them. We should consider what it was that bruised him ; *he was bruised for our iniquities* : The Scripture represents them, Isa. liii. as a great burden : and describes us all lying helpless under it, as a people laden with iniquity. Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree ; he bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows ; not those

we feel here only, but those we deserved to feel hereafter: we should consider who laid this burden on him: *The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. We might well say with Cain, our punishment was more than we were able to bear; this might be said to every one of us apart; but it was not the sins of one that he bore, he bore the sins of many; of multitudes as the sand on the sea-shore; and the sins of every one of them, as numerous. This was the heaviest, and most terrible weight in the world.

The curse of the law was a weight sufficient to crush a world. They who first brought it on themselves found it so: it sunk legions of angels who excel in strength, when they had abused that strength against the law, from the heaven of heavens, to the bottomless pit. The same weight that had crushed rebel angels, threatened man for joining with them. Before man could bear it; before any person could have his own proportion of it; it behoved, as it were, to be divided into numberless parcels. Man, after numberless ages, would have borne but a small part of it; *the wrath to come*, would have been always *wrath to come*, to all eternity; there would have been still infinitely more to bear. Christ only had strength to bear it all; to bear it all, in a manner at once; to bear it all, alone. None of the people were with him; our burden and our help was laid on One who was mighty: and his bearing it, was a glorious manifestation of his might; of the noblest kind of might, that he was *mighty to save*.

It is true, that load bruised him; but we should not be surprized at that, if we considered the dreadfulnes of the shock. Could we conceive the weight of eternal justice, ready to fall down, like lightning, with violence upon a world of malefactors, and view that sacred body interposed betwixt the load of wrath from above, and the heirs of wrath below, we should not wonder at these bruises, we should not despise them. We should consider the event, had that wrath fallen lower; had it met with no obstacle, it would have made havock of another kind; this world would have been worse than a chaos; and been covered with the dismal effects of vindictive justice, and divine righteous vengeance.

Although his sacred flesh was both mangled and marred with that dismal load ; yet we should consider that it sustained it. Here was incomparable strength, that it sustained that shock which would have grinded mankind into powder ; and he sustained it (as was said before) alone. He let no part of it fall lower : they who take sanctuary under this blessed covert, are so safe, that they have no more to do with that load of wrath but to look to it, John. iii. 14. To allude to the Psalmist's expressions, Psal. xci. 7, 8. *It shall not come nigh them, only with their eyes they shall behold, and see the reward of their wickedness ;* but they shall see it given to that righteous One : and all that in effect is left to them in this matter, is by faith to look and behold what a load of vengeance was hovering over their guilty heads, and how that guiltless and spotless body interposed ; they will see it crushed at a sad rate. But it is the end of the conflict, that shews on what side the victory is ; in that dreadful struggle, Christ's body was brought as low as the grave : but though the righteous fall, he rises again. Death was undermost in the struggle, 1 Cor. xv. 27. it was Christ that conquered in falling, and completed the conquest in rising. The cause, design and effects of these wounds, shew incomparable power and strength appearing in them ; the same strength appeared in his behaviour under them, and the manner in which he bore them, we see in the history of his death. He bore them with patience, and with pity and compassion towards others. A small part of his sorrow would have crushed the strongest spirit on earth, to death. The constitution of man is not able to bear too great violence of joy or grief : either the one or the other is sufficient to unhinge our frame. Christ's griefs were absolutely incomparable, but his strength was a match for them.

These considerations serve to shew, that it is the greatest stupidity to have diminishing thoughts of the wounds of the Redeemer. Yet, because this has been the stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles, and many professing Christians have not suitable impressions of it, it is proper to consider this subject a little more particularly. It is useful to observe how the Scripture represents the whole of Christ's humiliation

as one great action, by which he defeated the enemies of God and man, and founded a glorious everlasting monarchy. The prophets, and particularly the Psalmist, speak so much of Christ, as a powerful conqueror, whose enemies were to be made his footstool, that the Jews do still contend that their Messiah is to be a powerful, temporal prince, and a great fighter of battles; one who is to subdue their enemies by fire and sword; and by whom they themselves are to be raised above all the nations of the world. If pride and the love of earthly things did not blind them, it were easy to see that the descriptions of the prophets are vastly too high, to be capable of so low a meaning: this will be evident by taking a short view of them; which at the same time will shew the glory of that great action just now spoken of, by shewing the greatness of the design and the effects of it.

The prophets oft-times speak more expressly of the Messiah as a great King, which is a name of the greatest earthly dignity. The hand of Pilate was over-ruled to write that title of honour even on his cross. The glory of the kingdom that he was to found, is represented in very magnificent expressions by the prophet Daniel, chap. ii. 35,—45 verses, and chap. vii. 9, 10, 13, 14 verses. Here are lively representations of unparelled greatness, an everlasting kingdom to be founded, strong obstacles to be removed, powerful enemies to be defeated.

It is useful to observe the universal importance of this design: no part of the universe was unconcerned in it.

The glory of the Creator was eminently to be displayed, all the divine persons were to be gloriously manifested, the divine attributes to be magnified, the divine works and ways to be honoured; the earth was to be redeemed, hell conquered, heaven purchased, the law to be magnified and established, Isa. xlii. 21. Its commandments to be fulfilled, its curse to be suffered, the law was to be satisfied, and the criminal that broke it to be saved, and his tempter and accuser to be defeated; the head of the old serpent was to be bruised, his works to be destroyed, and the principalities and powers of darkness to be spoiled, and triumphed over openly, Col. ii. 15. The principalities and powers of heaven were to receive

new matter of everlasting Hallelujahs, and new companions to join in them; the fallen angels were to lose their old subjects, and the blessed angels to receive new fellow-citizens. No wonder this is called the making a new heaven, and a new earth; and even the face of hell was to be altered. Surely a more glorious design cannot be contrived; and the more we consider it, the more we may see the greatness of the action, that accomplished it.

As the design was great, the preparations were solemn. The stage of it was to be this earth; it was chiefly concerned in it: it was solemnly prepared for it. This is the view given us of the providences that preceded it; they fitted the stage of the world, for the great event, in the fulness of time. If we saw clearly the whole chain of them, we should see how they pointed towards this as their centre, and how they contributed to honour it, or rather it reflected the greatest honour upon them. The forecited prophecies in Daniel, besides several others, are instances of this: they shew how the great revolutions in the heathen world were subservient to this design, particularly, the succession of the four monarchies represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream: their rise and overthrow, were subservient to the rise of this monarchy, never to be overthrown.

We see but a small part of the chain of Providence, and even that very darkly: but this perhaps is worth the observing briefly, that universal empire came gradually from the eastern to the western parts of the world, from the Assyrians and Persians, to the Greeks and Romans. By this means greater communication and correspondence than formerly was opened up between distant nations of the earth: from the rising to the setting of the sun. The kingdom, represented by the stone cut out of the mountain, was to extend to both, Dan. ii. 34, 35. However we think of this, it is certain, that if we saw the plot of providence unfolded, we should see these and other revolutions, contributing to the fulness of times; and adjusting the world to that state and form of things that was fittest for the Redeemer's appearance.

These were a part of the preparations for the work in view; but they were but a part of them: for all the

sacrifices offered every morning and evening for so many ages, were preparations for it, and shadows of it: The same may be said of other figures and types. The church of God for four thousand years, waited with longing looks for this salvation of the Lord: they were refreshed with the sacrifices that prefigured it. The Heathens themselves had their sacrifices: they had sinfully lost the tradition of the true religion and the Messiah, handed down from Noah; yet providence ordered it so, that they did not wholly lose the rite of sacrificing. There is reason to acknowledge, a particular Providence preserving tradition in this point; for how otherwise could it enter into men's heads to serve their gods by sacrificing their beasts? It was useful that the world should not be entirely unacquainted with the notion of a sacrifice; the substitution of the innocent in the room of the guilty, all pointed towards this great oblation which was to make all others to cease. The predictions of the prophets in different ages, from Moses to Malachy, were also preparations for this great event. John the Baptist appeared as the morning-star, the harbinger of the Day-spring from on high: It was his particular office to prepare the way of the Lord before him. The evidence of the prophecies was bright; the Jews saw the time approaching; their expectations were big. Counterfeit Messiahs took advantage of it; and not only the Jews, but even the Heathens, probably by report from them, had a notion of an incomparably great person who was to appear about that time. These, besides many other great things, serve to shew what glorious preparation and pomp went before the great work we are speaking of.

Here it may perhaps occur to some, that it is strange, an action that had such great preparations before it happened, was so little observed when it did happen. Strictly speaking, this was not true: it was not much noticed indeed among blind and ignorant men; this was foretold; but it had a noble theatre, the whole universe were in effect spectators of it. The scripture teacheth us to reflect on this; particularly, to consider the principalities and powers in heavenly places, as attentive on-lookers on this glorious performance: we may infer this (besides other scriptures) from Eph. iii. 10,

These morning-stars shouted for joy, and sang together at the old creation, Job. xxxviii. 7. This was a new creation to sing at, a more amazing spectacle than the old. In that, the Son of God acted in the form of God; now he was to act in the low form of a servant. Nor was that the lowest part of it; he was to suffer in the form of a criminal: the Judge in the form of a malefactor; the Law-giver in the room of the rebel. The creation was a mean theatre for so great an event: and the noblest creatures unworthy judges of such an incomprehensible performance; its true glory was the approbation of its infinite Contriver, and, that He, at whose command it was done, was fully well pleased with it.

Yet to us, on whose nature's example has so much influence, it may be useful to consider that honourable croud of admirers and spectators that this performance had, and to reflect how heaven beheld with veneration, what was treated on earth with contempt; it was a large theatre, multitudes as sand on the sea-shore, a glorious company. In Scripture, angels, in comparison of men, are called gods: we are not sensible of their glory, which struck prophets almost dead with fear, and tempted an apostle to idolatry; but these, when the first-begotten is brought into the world, Heb. i. 6. compared with Psalm xcvi. 7. all these gods are commanded to worship him. The place of scripture where angels are called gods, is the place where they are commanded to worship Christ: and according to the same apostle, Heb. i. 6. it was a special time of his receiving this glory from the hosts of heaven, when his glory was to be vailed among the inhabitants of the earth. It is evident that they were spectators of all that he did in that state, and no doubt they were attentive spectators; they desired to look, as it were, with outstretched necks into these things; 1 Pet. i. 12. nor could they be unconcerned spectators: they were on divers accounts interested in it: they did not need a redemption themselves; but they delighted in ours: they loved Christ, and they loved his people: their love interested them in the glory of the one and the other. All we know of their work and office, as Luther expresses it, is to sing in heaven,

and minister on earth ; our *redemption* gave occasion for both ; they sang for joy when it began at Christ's birth ; Luke ii. 13. they went with gladness on messages of it beforehand, to the prophets, and to the virgin Mary ; they fed Christ in the desert ; they attended him in his agony, and at his resurrection ; and accompanied him at his ascension. They were concerned to look into these things in time, that were to be remembered to all eternity ; and into that performance on earth that was to be the matter of eternal Hallelujahs in heaven.

It should not therefore hinder our esteem of this great work, that the great men on earth took no notice of it : they were but mean, blind, ignorant, vulgar, compared to these powers and thrones just now mentioned, who beheld it with veneration. It is no disparagement to an excellent performance, that it is not admired by ignorant persons who do not understand it.

The principalities in heaven understood and therefore admired ; nor were the principalities and powers of darkness wholly ignorant of it : their example should not be a pattern to us ; but, what they beheld with anguish, we should behold with transport. Their plot was to make the earth, if possible, a province of hell ; they had heard of that glorious counterplot ; they were alarmed at the harbingers of it ; they looked on, and saw their plot step by step defeated ; and the projects of eternal mercy going on. All the universe therefore were interested on-lookers at this blessed undertaking : Heaven looked on with joy, and hell with terror, to observe the event of an enterprise that was contrived from everlasting, expected since the fall of man, and that was to be celebrated to all eternity.

Thus we have before us several things that shew the glory of the performance in view : the Design, of universal importance ; the Preparation, incomparably solemn ; a company of the most honourable, attentive spectators. As to the performance itself, it is plain it is not a subject for the tongues of men, the tongues of men are not for a subject above the thoughts of angels ; they are but desiring to look into it ; they have not seen fully through it : that is the work of eternity. Men may speak and write of it, but it is not so proper to describe it, as to tell

that it cannot be described : we may write about it, but if all its glory were described, the world would not contain its books, John xxi. 25. We may speak of it, but the most we can say about it, is to say that it is unspeakable : and the most that we know is, that it passes knowledge. It is he that performed this work, that can truly declare it, it is he who contrived, that can describe it, it is he who knows it : none knows the Father but the Son, or he to whom he shall reveal him. It is from him we should seek this knowledge, Eph i. 17. what of it is to be had here, is but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. but it leads us to the place where it will be perfect. Here we think as children, we speak as children : yet we are not therefore to neglect thinking or speaking of it ; our thoughts are useless without contemplating it, our speech useless without praising it. The rest of the history of the world, except as it relates to this, is but a history of trifles or confusions, dreams and vapours of sick-brained men. What we can know of it here, is but little : but that little, incomparably transcends all other knowledge : and all other earthly things are but loss and dung to it, Phil. iii. 8,—11. The least we can do, is with the angels to desire to look into these things ; and we should put up these desires to him who can satisfy them, that he may shine in our hearts by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The true object of this knowledge is the glory of God ; the means of obtaining it, is *light shining* from God ; and as to the place into which it shines, it is into our hearts. We are therefore to desire that light from him who is light itself ; but our prayers should be joined with other means ; particularly that meditation which Paul recommends to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 15. We ought to meditate on these things so as to give ourselves wholly to them : our meditations should be as lively, and as like to seeing the object before us, as possible : but it is not by strength of imagination that the soul is profited in this case, but by having the eyes of the understanding enlightened, Eph i. 18.

The makers and worshippers of images pretend to help us in this matter by pictures presented to the eye of the body : but it is not the eye of sense or force of

imagination, but the eye of faith that can give us true notions and right conceptions of this object, 2 Cor. v. 16. Men may paint Christ's outward suffering, but not that inward excellency from whence their virtue flowed, *viz.* his glory in himself, and his goodness to us. Men may paint one crucified, but how can that distinguish the Saviour from the criminals? On each side of him we may paint his hands and his feet fixed to the cross, but who can paint how these hands used always to be stretched forth for relieving the afflicted, and curing the diseased? or how these feet went always about doing good? and how they cure more diseases and do more good now than ever? We may paint the outward appearance of his sufferings, but not the inward bitterness or invisible causes of them. Men can paint the cursed tree, but not the curse of the law that made it so: Men can paint Christ bearing the cross to Calvary, but not Christ bearing the sins of many. We may describe the nails piercing his sacred flesh, but who can describe eternal justice piercing both flesh and spirit? We may describe the soldier's spear, but not the arrows of the Almighty: the cup of vinegar which he but tasted, but not the cup of wrath which he drank out to the lowest dregs; the derision of the Jews, but not the desertion of the Almighty forsaking his Son, that he might never forsake us who were his enemies.

These sorrows he suffered, and the benefits he purchased, are equally beyond description. Though we describe his hands and his feet mangled and pierced, who can describe how in one hand, as it were, he grasped multitudes of souls ready to sink into ruin, and in the other hand an everlasting inheritance to give them? or how these bruised feet crushed the old serpent's head, and trampled on death and hell, and sin the author of both? We may describe the blood issuing from his body, but not the waters of life streaming from the same source, oceans of spiritual and eternal blessings: we may paint how that blood covered his own body, but not how it sprinkles the souls of others, yea sprinkles many nations: we may paint the crown of thorns he wore, but not the crown of glory he purchased. Happy were it for us, if our faith had as lively views of this object, as our ima-

ginations oft-times have of incomparably less important objects ; then would the pale face of our Saviour shew more powerful attractives than all the brightest objects in nature besides. Notwithstanding the gloomy aspect of death, it wou^{ld} discover such transcendent majesty as would make all the glory in the world lose its relish with us ; we should see then, indeed, the awful frowns of justice, but these frowns are not at us, but at our enemies, our murderers, that is, our sins. The cross shews Christ's pitying his own murderers, but shews no pity to our murderers ; therefore we may see the majesty of eternal justice tempered with the mildness of infinite compassion. Infinite pity is an object worth looking to, especially by creatures in distress and danger ; there death doth appear in state, as the executioner of the law ; but there he appears also deprived of his sting with regard to us. There we may hear also the sweetest melody in the world to the awakened sinner ; that peace-speaking blood, that speaks better things than that of Abel ; the sweetest and loudest voice in the world, louder than the thunder on Sinai : its voice reacheth heaven and earth, pleading with God in behalf of men, and beseeching men to be reconciled to God ; speaking the most comfortable and the most seasonable things in the world, to objects in distress and danger, that is, *salvation* and *deliverance*.

Of the various views we can take of this blessed work, this is the most suitable, to consider it as the most glorious deliverance that ever was or will be. Other remarkable deliverances of God's people are considered as shadows and figures of this : Moses, Joshua, David, and Zerubabel, were types of this great Joshua ; according to his name, so is he, JESUS a Deliverer. The number of the persons delivered, shew the glory of this deliverance to be unparalleled ; it was but one single nation that Moses delivered, though indeed it was a glorious deliverance, relieving sixty thousand at once, and a great deal more ; but this was incomparably more extensive. The apostle John calls the multitude of the redeemed, a multitude that no man could number, Rev. vii. 9. of all nations, kindreds, people and tongues. The unparalleled glory of this deliverance appears not only in the number of the delivered, but also in the nature of the

deliverance. It was not men's bodies only that it delivered, but immortal souls, more valuable than the world, Matth. xvi. 26. It was not from such a bondage as that of Egypt, but one as far beyond it as eternal misery is worse than temporal bodily toil: so that nothing can equal the wretchedness of the state from which they are delivered, but the blessedness of that to which they are brought.

But here we should not forget the opposition made against this deliverance: It was the greatest that can withstand any good design. The apostle, Eph. vi. 12. teaches to consider the opposition of flesh and blood, as far inferior to that of principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. The devil is called the god of this world, 2 Cor. iv. 4. and himself and his angels, the rulers of the darkness of this world, Eph. vi. 12. They had obtained a dominion over the world, (excepting that small corner Judea), for many ages, by the consent of the inhabitants. They found them not only pliable, but fond of their chains, and in love with their bondage. But they had heard of this intended enterprise of supreme power and mercy, this invasion and descent upon their dominions: they had heard of the design of bruising their head, overturning their government, making their slaves to revolt. Long experience had made them expert in the black art of perdition; long success made them confident; and their malice still pushed them on to opposition, whatever be the success. As they were no doubt apprized of this designed deliverance, and alarmed at the signs of its approach; they made all preparations to oppose it, mustered all their forces, employed all their skill, and, as all was at stake, made their last efforts for a kind of decisive engagement: they armed every proper instrument, and set every engine of spiritual destruction a-working; temptations, persecutions, violence, slander, treachery, counterfeit Messiahs, and the like.

Their Adversary appeared in a form that did not seem terrible; not only as a man, but as one despised of the people, Psal. xxii. 6. accounted as a worm, and no man: but this made the event more glorious. It was a spectacle worth the admiration of the universe, to see the

despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell back upon itself: to see one in the likeness of the Son of man, wresting the keys of hell and death out of the hands of the devil: to see him entangling the rulers of darkness in their own nets, and making them ruin their designs with their own stratagems. They made one disciple betray him, and another deny him; they made the Jews accuse him, and the Romans crucify him: but the wonderful Counsellor was more than match for the old serpent; and the Lion of the tribe of Judah too hard for the roaring lion. The devices of these powers of darkness were in the event made means of spoiling and triumphing over themselves, Col. ii. 15. The greatest cruelty of devils, and their instruments, was made subservient to the designs of the infinite mercy of God; and that hideous sin of the sons of men, over-ruled in a perfectly holy manner, for making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24. The opposition made to this deliverance, did but advance its glory; particularly the opposition it met with from those for whose good it was intended, that is, sinners themselves: this served to enhance the glory of mysterious long-suffering and mercy.

It would take a long time to insist on all the opposition he met with, both from the enemies of sinners, and from sinners themselves; but at last he weathered the storm, surmounted difficulties, led captivity captive, obtained a perfect conquest, purchased an everlasting inheritance, founded an everlasting kingdom, triumphed on the cross, died with the publishing his victory in his mouth, That it was finished.

The world is represented as silent before the Lord when he rose up to work this great deliverance. And, as was shown before, no part of the world was unconcerned in it. The expectation was great, but the performance could not but surpass it. Every part of it was perfect, and every circumstance graceful, nothing deficient, nothing superfluous, nothing but what became the dignity of the person, and the eternal wisdom of the contrivance. Every thing was suited to the glorious design, and all the means proportioned to the end. The foundation of the everlasting kingdom was laid, before

it was observed by the men that opposed it, and so laid, that it was impossible for the gates of hell to prevail against it: all things adjusted for completing the deliverance, and for securing it against all endeavours and attempts to overturn it. The great Deliverer in that low disguise, wrought through his design, so as none could oppose it without advancing it to the full satisfaction of that infinite wisdom that devised it, and the eternal admiration of the creatures that beheld it.

The Father was well pleased; heaven and earth rejoiced, and was astonished; the powers of hell fell down like lightning. In heaven, loud acclamations and applauses, and new songs of praises began, that are not ended yet, and never will: they will still increase. Still new redeemed criminals from earth, saved from the gates of hell, and entering the gates of heaven, with a new song of praise in their mouths, add to the ever grown melody, of which they shall never be weary; for that is their rest, their labour of love, never to rest, day nor night, giving praise and glory to Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb at his right hand, who redeemed them from all nations and tongues, washing them in his own blood, and making them kings and priests unto God.

But still an objection may be made concerning the little honour and respect this work met with on earth, where it was performed. This, duly considered, instead of being an objection, is a commendation of it. Sin had so corrupted the taste of mankind, that it had been a kind of reflection on this work, if it had suited it. Herein the beauty of it appears, that it was above that depraved, wretched taste which it was designed to cure; and that it did actually work that change on innumerable multitudes of all nations.

If the cross of Christ met with such contempt on earth, it met also with incomparable honour: it made the greatest revolution in the world that ever happened since the creation, or that ever will happen till Shiloh come again: a more glorious, a more lasting change than ever was produced by all the princes and conquerors in the world: it conquered multitudes of souls, and established a sovereignty over men's thoughts, wills and af-

fections: this was a conquest to which human power hath no proportion. Persecutors turned apostles; and vast numbers of Pagans, after knowing the cross of Christ, suffered death and torments cheerfully to honour it. The growing light shone from East to West; and opposition was not only useless, but subservient to it. The changes it produced, are sometimes described by the prophets in the most magnificent expressions: thus for instance, Isa. xxxv. 7. *It turned the parched grounds into pools of waters, made the habitations of dragons to become places of grass, and reeds, and rushes; made wildernesses to bud and blossom as the rose.* It wrought this change among us in the utmost isles of the Gentiles. We ought to compare our present privileges with the state of our forefathers before they knew this blessed object; and we shall find it owing to the glory of the cross of Christ, that we who are met here to-day, to worship the living God in order to the eternal enjoyment of him, are not worshipping sun, moon, and stars, or sacrificing to idols.

But the chief effects of the cross of Christ, and which shew most of its glory, are its inward effects on the souls of men. There, (as was before hinted) it makes a new creation; Christ is formed in them, the source and the hope of glory: this is a glorious workmanship, the image of God on the soul of man. But since these effects of the cross of Christ are secret, and the shame put upon it oft-times too public, and since human nature is so much influenced by example; it will be useful to take such a view of the honour done to this object, as may arm us against the bad example of stupid unbelievers.

The cross of Christ is an object of such incomparable brightness, that it spread a glory round it to all the nations of the earth, all the corners of the universe, all the generations of time, and all the ages of eternity. The greatest actions or events that ever happened on earth, filled with their splendour and influence, but a moment of time, and a point of space: the splendour of this great object fills immensity, and eternity. If we take a right view of its glory, we shall see it contemplated with attention, spreading influence and attracting looks from times past, present, and to come: heaven,

earth, and hell, angels, saints, devils. We shall see it to be both the object of the deepest admiration of the creatures, and the perfect approbation of the infinite Creator; we shall see the best part of mankind, the church of God for four thousand years looking forward to it before it happened; new generations yet unborn rising up to admire and honour it in continual successions, till time shall be no more; innumerable multitudes of angels and saints looking back to it with holy transport, to the remotest ages of eternity. Other glories decay by length of time: if the splendour of this object change, it will be only by increasing. The visible sun will spend his beams in process of time, and as it were grow dim with age; this object hath a rich stock of beams which eternity cannot exhaust. If saints and angels grow in knowledge, the splendour of this object will be still increasing; it is unbelief that intercepts its beams; unbelief takes place only on earth, there is no such thing in heaven or in hell. It will be a great part of future blessedness, to remember the object that purchased it; and of future punishment, to remember the object that offered deliverance from it: it will add life to the beams of love in heaven, and make the flames of hell burn fiercer: its beams will not only adorn the regions of light, but pierce the regions of darkness: it will be the desire of the saints in light, and the great eye-sore of the prince of darkness and his subjects.

Its glory produces powerful effects wherever it shines: they who behold this glory are transformed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. An Ethiopian may look long enough to the visible sun before it change his black colour; but this does it: it melts cold and frozen hearts; it breaks stony hearts; it pierces adamants; it penetrates through thick darkness. How justly is it called marvellous light! 1 Pet. iii. 9. It gives eyes to the blind to look to itself, and not only to the blind, but to the dead: it is the light of life, a powerful light, its energy is beyond the force of thunder; and it is more mild than the dew on the tender grass.

But it is impossible fully to describe all its effects, unless we could fully reckon up all the spiritual and eternal evils it prevents, all the riches of grace and glory it pur-

chases, and all the divine perfections it displays. It has this peculiar to it, that as it is full of glory itself, it communicates glory to all that behold it aright: it gives them a glorious robe of righteousness; their God is their glory: it calls them to glory and virtue; it gives them the Spirit of God and of glory; it gives them joy unspeakable and full of glory here, and an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory hereafter.

It communicates a glory to all other objects, according as they have any relation to it; it adorns the universe; it gives a lustre to nature, and to Providence: it is the greatest glory of this lower world, that its Creator was for a while its inhabitant. A poor landlord thinks it a lasting honour to his cottage, that he has once lodged a prince or emperor; with how much more reason may our poor cottage, this earth, be proud of it, that the Lord of glory was its tenant from his birth to his death! yea, that he rejoiced in the habitable parts of it, before it had a beginning, even from everlasting: Prov. viii.

31.

It is the glory of the world that he who formed it, dwelt on it; of the air, that he breathed in it; of the sun, that it shone on him; of the ground, that it bore him; of the sea, that he walked on it; of the elements, that they nourished him; of the waters, that they refreshed him; of us men, that he lived and died among us, yea, that he lived and died for us; that he assumed our flesh and blood, and carried it to the highest heavens; where it shines as the eternal ornament and wonder of the creation of God. It gives also a lustre to Providence: it is the chief event that adorns the records of time, and enlivens the history of the universe. It is the glory of the various great lines of Providence, that they point at this as their centre; that they prepared the way for its coming; that after its coming they are subservient to the ends of it; though in a way indeed to us at present mysterious, and unsearchable. Thus we know that they either fulfil the promises of the crucified Jesus, or his threatenings: and shew either the happiness of receiving him, or the misery of rejecting him.

THE END.



Edinburgh, September 1797.

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